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ABSTRACT

The University of Minnesota Technical College-Waseca prepares students for midmanagement, semiprofessional positions in the broad fields related to agriculture. The college operates on a year-round quarterly basis, with the summer quarter being no different from the fall, winter, and spring quarters. Students can start any quarter and graduate any quarter; they can attend school continuously or intermittently, full-time or part-time. Planning for the college tied the your-round concept into all phases of the operations before the doors actually opened. Programs were developed with a minimum of prerequisites, and most courses are self-contained units. Nine-month faculty are rotated throughout the year. Registration, financial aids, veterans assistance, and other procedures have been developed to fit a year-round program. Advantages of the year-round system include the opportunity for students to fulfill employment experience requirements during the time of year that is most advantageous from a learning point point of view, and better use of expensive facilities and equipment. Although problems such as faculty fatigue, lack of time for professional updating, difficulty in maintaining the physical plant, and misunderstanding resulting from the break with tradition have occurred, the program has been well accepted by the students and the agricultural industry. (Author/NHM)

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YEAR-ROUND EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA TECHNICAL COLLEGE, WASECA*

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- Edward C. Frederick

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The University of Minnesota Technical College-Waseca is a relatively new institution which began operation in the Fall of 1971. The Technical College has a single mission -- that of preparing students for mid-management, semi-professional positions in the broad fields related to agriculture.

The college adopted a year-round educational program at the outset in order to meet the needs of students and agriculture. The college operates on a quarterly basis, with the Summer Quarter being no different than the Fall, Winter, and Spring Quarters. Students can start any quarter and graduate any quarter, they can go continuously or intermittently, full-time or part-time.

Planning for the college tied the year-round concept into all phases of the operation before the doors actually opened. Programs were developed with a minimum of prerequisites and most courses are self-contained units. Staff are hired who are willing to teach in a year-round program. Nine-month faculty are rotated throughout the year. Registration, financial aids, veterans assistance and other procedures have been developed to fit a year-round program.

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Times have changed and so has agriculture. Because of herbicides and other modern technology, the summer months are not the busiest quarter on the farm or in the agri-businesses in the area served by the college. Planting time in the spring and harvesting time in the fall are busier. With a year-round program, some students can and do attend classes in the summer and winter and "stop out" in the spring for planting crops and in the fall for harvesting.

*Presented at the panel, A Look at Year-Round Education Operating in Colleges and Universities, Seventh National Seminar on Year-Round Education, Denver, Colorado, May 11-14, 1975

Technical College-Waseca emphasizes laboratory and practical experiences. The year-round program makes use of outdoor agricultural laboratories which are most highly developed during the summer months. Another plus is the efficient use of the facilities and research at the adjacent 840-acre Southern Experiment Station, another unit of the University of Minnesota. The year-round program of the college allows for maximum use of the Southern Experiment Station in the teaching program during the summer months as well as throughout the year.

With the four-quarter system, students may start college classes immediately after finishing high school and thus graduate and begin employment earlier. Students also have an opportunity to accelerate their program by going continuously throughout the year.

One quarter of employment experience is part of our technical program. This is called the Preoccupational Preparation Program and gives the student practical industry experience. The year-round education system assists this internship program in that it allows the student to be out in industry during the quarter (time of the year) that is most advantageous from a learning point of view. For example, in the field of horticulture, the student may go out to work in the industry in the spring and return to the College in the summer.

Greater use can be made of expensive facilities and equipment needed in a Technical College in a year-round program. It also provides for increasing the number of graduates without increasing the physical facilities in the same relationship, something which interests legislators today.

Year-round enrollment at the college has been as follows:

	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer
1971-72	134	151	127	105
1972-73	320	345	302	201
1973-74	406	425	356	264
1974-75	541	599	509	300+ projected

Enrollment is continuing to increase rapdily in all quarters including the Summer Quarter. Twenty-five percent of the students that enroll in Summer Quarter are directly out of high school.

Some areas of concern in year-round education which need to be overcome include faculty fatigue and time for professional updating, maintenance of the physical plant, need for air conditioning in the summer, and misunderstandings that result from breaking with tradition. This latter is one of the toughest hurdles. An attempt is being made to overcome faculty fatigue and professional updating by utilizing nine-month appointments and rotating those to cover the year, team teaching, single quarter leaves, and others.

The year-round program has been well accepted by the students and the ricultural industry. It gives a great deal of flexibility to the program at Waseca. The quality of education has been improved. The advantages outweigh the disadvantages. For the Technical College for Agriculture at Waseca, the year-round program is not a concept but an idea "whose time has come."

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